4: Jaspan

●105

●FQ6 Ila FQ6
Subia FQ11
Tonga FQ12

[For a brief introduction in the form of a cultural summary to the Ila and closely related Subia and Tonga tribes, see category 116, pp. 1-42.]

Identification

The Ila (Baila, Baschukulompo, Mashikolumbere, Mashukolumbwe), with whom are included the closely related Bizhi, Lumbu (Nanzela), Lundwe, and Mbala, are a Bantu nation, closely akin in language to the Lenje, Sala, and Tonga. They are reported to number 43,000 in 1915 on about 9,000 miles, but a 1946 estimate gives 20,000 Ila, 2,000 Bizhi, 2,000 Lumbu, 4,000 Lundwe, and 7,000 Mbala--a total of 35,000. Some Pygmies (Twa) live in swamps in the Ila country. The Mbala were twice raided by the Chikunda in the 19th century. The Ila were invaded by the Kololo in the 1820's and thereafter paid tribute to the Lozi kingdom.

Basic Economy

Agriculture and animal husbandry are of primary and perhaps equal importance [Jaspan says primarily pastoral]. There is also considerable though subsidiary hunting and fishing and some gathering. Shifting hoe cultivation with brand-tillage prevails; there is no fallowing, crop rotation, or artificial fertilization. The staple crops are maize and sorghum, followed by bulrush millet and eleusine; other crops include beans, earth peas, peanuts, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, gourds, and a little manioc. Cattle are numerous, numbering 70,000 in 1920, 47,000 in 1947. Milk is a staple article of diet, and butter is made, chiefly for anointment. Other domestic animals are goats, sheep, dogs (numerous), chickens (flesh but not eggs eaten), and pigeons. There is seasonal transhumance, cattle being driven to the banks of the river in the dry season (June to August).

Sex Division of Labor

Men hunt, fish, herd, milk, clear the land, and do some agriculture in private gardens. The women gather and do most of the hoeing, planting, and weeding.

Property

The most important possessions are cattle, followed by slaves. Land is collectively owned by the community, is non-inheritable, and is administered by the local headman.

There is "positional inheritance" of livestock, slaves, personal possessions, widows, and social status, as among the Bemba. The heir is selected after considerable discussion by a council of relatives; though usually a matrilineal kinsman, he may be a son. The heir distributes a considerable share of his inheritance among the sons, sisters' sons, and brothers of the deceased, with a traditional share to the family of the mother of the deceased.

Social Stratification

Slavery is very common, and results from purchase, debt, or crime. A slave may be redeemed by his relatives. The children of a purchased female slave are slaves, but if by her owner are free and are affiliated with his sib. Status distinctions among freemen include prestige for wealth in cattle and moderate prerogatives for the families of chiefs and headmen.

Marriage

A girl is usually betrothed at her initiation. A substantial bride-price is paid in cattle (averaging 4-6 head), in addition to blankets, shells, and hoes. It is provided largely by a man's matrilineal relatives with some help from his patrilineal kinsmen, and is distributed chiefly to the bride's maternal kinsmen with a very small share to her parents. The bride-price gives the husband the right to remove his wife immediately and gives him a claim to his children. Bride-service does not occur.

Polygyny is general and exclusively non-sororal. The first wife is chief wife, and each co-wife has her own hut. Men regularly allow their wives to have a publicly recognized paramour, from whom he receives payments. There is preferential levirate and permitted sororate. Secondary unions are also allowed with FaWi and MoBrWi.

Family

The normal household unit is a patrilocal extended family, occupying a compound separated from others by a fence. Extended families are not confirmed by Jaspan.

Residence

Residence is normally patrilocal, a son remaining in his father's village even if he leaves his household. Avunculocal residence is the norm for chiefs, and the maternal uncle has marked authority; he could formerly sell his SiCh into slavery. Grown children occupy a separate hut for each sex in the family compound.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Local agamy prevails.

There is preferential marriage with FaSiDa. Unions with parallel cousins are forbidden; also with MoBrDa, though this was once a preferred marriage.

There are about 93 exogamous, totemic, non-localized matri-sibs (mukoa). The members of a sib residing in a "commune" constitute a matri-lineage. The fact that each sib is traditionally associated with a particular locality suggests former clan localization. There are also exogamous, localized patri-lineages (lunungu), associated with the worship of patrilineal ancestors; membership in a patri-lineage is a justification of patrilineal inheritance. Sib exogamy extends to sex relations. A man is regarded as having honorary membership in his father's matri-sib. Patrilineal descent prevails for the children of slave wives.

Kinship Terminology

Fa--tata. Mo--bama, nina, noko. Ch--mwana [ngu]. Sibling--mukwesu. ElBr(ms), ElSi)ws)--mukando. YoBr(ms), YoSi(ws)--mwanicha[ngu]. Si(ws)--mwenzuma. Si(ms), Br(ws)--muchizi. Br(ws)--muchizi.

Avuncular and nepotic terms are of bifurcate merging type.

Cousin terminology is basically of Iroquois type, though somewhat mixed by alternative terms.

Settlement Pattern

There are settled villages of 3-200 huts arranged in a circle or horseshoe around a central cattle corral, with the headman's hut opposite the main entrance facing west. Each extended family occupies a separate compound. Huts are round in ground plan with mud-plastered cylindrical walls and conical thatched roofs.

Community Organization

Clans are absent. Tooth extraction was formerly practiced. There are age-grades, with initiation ceremonies every 4-5 years; an age-set consists of all males and females born in the same year and initiated together.

Local Government

Each village has a headman and an informal council of elders. Succession is usually but not necessarily matrilineal.

State

Villages are grouped into "communes"(cishi) of from 100 to 300 inhabitants, consisting of several villages of equal size or of a large one and several smaller ones. Each commune or district has a chief, for whom the village headmen form a council; he is war leader and receives tribute. A new chief is selected by a funerary council of sibmates and commune elders. Though succession is basically matrilineal (with avunculocal residence), it is not necessarily so, and a So or BrSo may be chosen; wealth is an important criterion. Among the Lumbu, succession is still strictly matrilineal. Among the Ila the son of a slave mother is often preferred since he has no matrilineal kinsmen and is thus "more likely to have the interests of the community at heart." There is no political integration above the level of the "commune."

Warfare

Communes are in "a constant state of feud," and there have been defensive wars against Lozi and Ndebele raiders.

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